



NEWS RELEASE

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A "One Health" Approach to Influenza Task force of leading flu scientists will convene in D.C. to consider lessons learned from H1N1 pandemic

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A task force of some of the world's leading influenza experts will meet in Washington, D.C. during early December to consider what we can learn from current efforts to address the H1N1 virus and how we can better utilize and develop science to prevent and manage influenza outbreaks. The DHS National Center for Foreign Animal and Zoonotic Disease Defense and the NIH Western Regional Center of Excellence for Biodefense and Emerging Infectious Diseases are working together to convene this panel of experts drawn from the diverse backgrounds of public health, medicine, veterinary medicine, epidemiology, virology, and wildlife biology.

In the past, scientists and health officials have tended to look at human and animal diseases separately. Recently, as others have observed, it has become more obvious that many diseases move through the environment, changing forms as they are transmitted among humans and animals. Studying this "animal-human-environment interface," taking a "one health" approach to both animal and human diseases, is key to understanding how some pathogens can go from causing a simple flu season to triggering a global outbreak of a deadly disease (such as the 1918 influenza pandemic that killed an estimated 50 million humans around the world). In the scientific and health communities there is widening support and use of this "one-health" approach to understanding diseases, but there are still considerable challenges in learning how to actually integrate the diverse scientific disciplines that are involved and to fully understand the implications of how diseases evolve and transform into more dangerous forms at this animal-human-environment interface.

The Task Force on a One Health Approach to Influenza will examine the potential threat to human health posed by the H1N1 virus as a case study in how influenza can be better understood, prevented, and treated by examining how the disease transforms and is transmitted among animals and humans in the environment. The Task Force will identify gaps in current scientific knowledge about these processes and will describe the research and technologies that could be developed to help prevent possible pandemics in the future.

Web sites:

- DHS National Center for Foreign Animal and Zoonotic Disease Defense
 - <http://fazd.tamu.edu>
- NIH Western Regional Center of Excellence for Biodefense and Emerging Infectious Diseases
 - www.rcebiodefense.org/rce6/rce6pub.htm

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